

## **Rainbow District School Board**

**May 8, 2015**

### **Labour Disruption**

**By Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation – District 3**

## **Clarification of statements about strike action**

### **Purpose:**

This document provides facts in order to clarify statements and misconceptions about OSSTF – District 3's decision to leave the local bargaining table and begin strike action against Rainbow District School Board.

### **Context:**

The collective bargaining framework for the education sector, set out in the *School Boards Collective Bargaining Act, 2014*, features a two-tier bargaining process, or central and local bargaining as it is often referred to. The Government of Ontario and OSSTF Provincial agreed to this framework.

In this framework, issues such as salary, benefits and class sizes are negotiated on a province-wide basis at a central table. Participants at the central level include the government and trustees' associations as partners, bargaining with teachers' federations and education worker unions.

Before bargaining commences, the parties agree which items will be negotiated centrally. Any other issues are then negotiated locally. The parties to local bargaining are individual school boards and their respective local bargaining units. The government has no involvement in these negotiations.

**Statement:** OSSTF – District 3 has been without a contract since August 2014. Why did the Board not meet earlier?

**Fact:** The contract expired in August 2014, but we could not legally begin local negotiations until a decision was made at the central level about what items would be bargained centrally (at the central table) and, as a result, not available for local bargaining. This happened in mid-December. The information was shared with school boards in January 2015.

**Statement:** The Board has been stalling and not meeting with OSSTF – District 3 to negotiate at the local table.

**Fact:** The Board received a request for dates to commence negotiations on Thursday, February 12, 2015. The Board responded on Tuesday, February 17, 2015 and agreed to meet on March 6, 2015.

**Statement:** The Board has not met enough with OSSTF – District 3.

**Fact:** The Board met with OSSTF – District 3 on March 6, 2015. OSSTF – District 3 did not have their final brief ready on that day. The Board did not receive their final brief until March 12, 2015. The parties met on April 1, 15, 22, and 25, 2015. On two of these dates, OSSTF – District 3 suggested that part of the day should be spent preparing for the strike.

**Statement:** The Board has not taken the OSSTF – District 3 proposal seriously.

**Fact:** OSSTF – District 3 presented the Board with a 70-page brief and proposed over 200 changes to the collective agreement. The Board has replied to the union proposal in full. The Board respectfully proposed a two-page brief with six changes to the collective agreement, which do not change the daily working conditions for teachers. The union has said no to all Board proposals.

**Statement:** The Board has not agreed with what OSSTF – District 3 presented.

**Fact:** OSSTF – District 3 tabled proposals that, in their entirety, would be impossible for the Board to completely agree to. The proposals would significantly impact negotiated management rights and the ability to operate schools effectively in the best interests of students. The union proposals also came with a significant price tag – almost \$2 million per year – for one of nine bargaining units that the Board negotiates with.

**Statement:** OSSTF – District 3 has stated that the Board has tabled proposals on issues that are to be negotiated centrally.

**Fact:** The opposite is true. The Board has proposed only items that were determined to be local issues. Our original statement pointed out: *“Our students and their families are caught in a dispute that is really between OSSTF and the province.”* We stand by this statement.

**Statement:** No agreement could be reached because of Board proposals that would negatively impact on working conditions.

**Fact:** The Board proposal did not contain any changes to the daily working conditions for teachers.

**Statement:** The Board wants to increase class sizes, limit prep time and freeze salaries and benefits.

**Fact:** These issues are not part of the local negotiation process and are not part of the Board’s proposal.

**Statement:** The Board has aligned itself with the Ontario Public School Boards’ Association (OPSBA).

**Fact:** OPSBA is not involved in local negotiations in any way. OPSBA is at the central table in accordance with provincial legislation. Unlike OSSTF – District 3, who has provincial representatives at the local table, there are no OPSBA officials at the local table representing Rainbow District School Board.

**Statement:** OSSTF - District 3 is on strike because negotiations are slow.

**Fact:** OSSTF President Paul Elliott informed members about a plan that was decided in May 2014. At the OSSTF annual general meeting in March 2015, he stated that this plan was part of the provincial OSSTF strategy to be used during upcoming negotiations. He called for seven District presidents to stand up and be recognized. He named them the “Magnificent 7”. It was at this point that seven specific Boards were targeted for strike action – before local negotiations had even started.

Here is the excerpt:

*Last May we convened a special meeting of this assembly. The delegates at that assembly unanimously endorsed a plan – a plan to ensure that we, collectively, take care of one another in the event that any bargaining unit is compelled to take job action in pursuit of a fair settlement. That endorsement is direct reflection of our members’ resolve to achieve fair, freely-bargained collective agreements with school boards across this province. Strike votes in the fall of 2014 served to reinforce that resolve, but they also served as a stark indication of the level of frustration at the local level. Our members employed by school boards have gone six months without a contract, and despite giving notice to bargain on June 3 of last year, we are still awaiting meaningful negotiations. But all we have seen are outright attacks on the learning conditions of students across this province.*

*I ask that the delegates of the following districts rise when called:  
District 3 Rainbow, District 6A Thunder Bay, District 13 Durham, District 19 Peel, District 20 Halton, District 24 Waterloo, District 25 Ottawa-Carlton.*

*The clock is ticking, and our patience is wearing thin. And with every tick of that clock, these seven Districts are moving closer to a full withdrawal of services by the end of April at the very latest. Unless we begin to see school boards take this process seriously, unless we see positive movement at those bargaining tables and the removal of any strips those boards are pursuing, unless we see some real improvements, our members will make good on their commitment to job action.*

*To the magnificent 7, on behalf of all of us. Thank you for your commitment, your courage and your solidarity.*

*In conclusion let me say this:*

*We have a plan, and we will stay the course. If it comes down to job action, by any bargaining unit, anywhere in this province, this entire Federation – every member – will be actively supporting that action. We are on this road together. We have faith in our resolve, we have faith in each other, and we walk down this road in solidarity. And when we get to our destination, we will have fair and reasonable collective agreements with real, concrete improvements.*

*We started down this road together and we will stay on this road together. (OSSTF/FEESO President's Address — AMPA 2015)*

You can access the full speech at the following link:

[http://www.osstf.on.ca/~media/Provincial/Documents/News/Member%20News/transcript-president-paul-elliott-address-AMPA-2015.ashx?sc\\_lang=en-CA](http://www.osstf.on.ca/~media/Provincial/Documents/News/Member%20News/transcript-president-paul-elliott-address-AMPA-2015.ashx?sc_lang=en-CA)

**Statement:** OSSTF – District 3 has publicly stated that Rainbow District School Board does not respect its teachers.

**Fact:** Rainbow District School Board has the deepest respect for its teachers and indeed, for all its staff. Teachers are our partners in education, leaders in our classrooms and role models for our students. Teachers share our vision. They are “leaders in learning” and they “inspire success for all students by reaching minds and touching hearts.”

We want our students back in their classrooms with our dedicated teachers enabling them to achieve their goals.